



भारतीय कृषि अनुसन्धान परिषद् Indian Council of Agricultural Research

Advisories to Agricultural Universities during COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented situation and new challenges for agricultural education being offered in various agricultural universities across the country. The ICAR has taken several immediate measures to ensure continuity in teaching- learning process. As a part of these initiatives, based on UGC Guidelines for the Universities in view of COVID-19 pandemic and in consultation with academic experts and administrators of agricultural universities, the ICAR has articulated the following advisories for the betterment of academic ambience in the agricultural universities.

Curricula delivery through e-learning

- The current situation necessitates the dependence on online learning mode. Hence, necessary steps need to be taken by the universities to create such learning resources and encourage the students to avail such online courses. All AUs are requested to take necessary steps to connect each student through various online tools for their classes, assignments and other related activities, so that there is no time lag in the schedule of academic session. Further, the Universities may avail the available online options such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Google Hangout, MOOCs, Cisco Webex Meeting, You Tube Streaming, OERs, SWAYAM Platform and SWAYAMPBHA.
- The e-Courses for under graduate programmes in seven disciplines namely; Agriculture, Fisheries Science, Dairy Science, Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Community Science and Agricultural Engineering covering 1107 credits and 15820 lessons have been created by ICAR. These e-courses are available at <https://ecourses.icar.gov.in> and the same may be made available to all the students.
- The faculty may contribute for the benefit of students through WhatsApp groups, other social media tools and emails. Even after posting the lecture material online, teachers need to maintain communication with the students and discuss course material with them on a regular basis.
- It has been decided that all e-resources of agricultural education available with ICAR along with the resources developed under NAIP, CAFT and NAHEP shall be made available to all the students free of cost. The details of e-resources along with URL are available on ICAR Education Portal (<https://education.icar.gov.in/>). Similarly, all AUs are requested to share their resources by providing link to the Portal to benefit the student fraternity for effective teaching-learning process. The soft copies of practical manuals developed with ICAR support also need to be shared through this Portal.



- In addition to the above resources teachers may be encouraged to develop their own e-content and be delivered to the students as and where required to fill all gaps. Such content may also be shared with other AUs directly through ICAR portal for mutual help to each other.
- ICAR has established Consortium for e-Resources in Agriculture (CeRA) to facilitate 24x7 online accesses of select journals in agricultural and allied sciences to all researchers, teachers and students. During this pandemic crisis, Remote Access Facility is extended to all the end users to make use of these resources from anywhere. Thus, the universities may inform all the users to access the available e-resources under CeRA.

Implementation of Student READY

- To complete the Student READY programme in the final year of under-graduation, the university may customize its five components (RAWE, Experiential Learning, In-plant training, Hands-on training and Student project) to suit the students based on the prevailing situation. In case the students are not able to complete their allotted component, the other components may be assigned based on their suitability (The students undergoing different components of Student READY programmes may be guided to complete the same through alternate means viz. carrying out activities while sitting at home wherever possible (Floriculture and Landscaping, Food Science & Technology), practical oriented Project Assignments, interpretation of data obtained in Project works, etc.).
- During RAWE, allotment of students may be done in the respective villages/areas from where the students come. In-plant training may be preferred at isolated rural industry without any crowding. The progress may be monitored and guided by respective KVKs and State Development Department officials along with RAWE Coordinators.

Internship for B.V.Sc. and A.H. students

- In order to complete the mandatory requirement of internship for B.V.Sc. & AH students, possibilities may be explored to attach them in the dispensaries/Veterinary hospitals/Clinics near to their locations in compliance with the VCI regulations.

Rescheduling of Academic Session 2020-21

- As of now, several Boards have not yet completed their Class XII examinations. Because of this situation, the proposed entrance examinations for various professional courses are rescheduled. Obviously, imminent delay is expected in the admission process of the university system for the next academic session. In order to tackle this situation, the universities may require some amendments in their academic calendar for the academic session 2020-21.
- Universities may adjust existing admission deadlines to give students more time for the Academic session 2020-21



- In view of the present scenario and future uncertainties, if the university faces difficulty in making admissions as per the existing policy, it may adopt alternative modes of admission process, if otherwise legally tenable.

Conduct of ICAR-All India Entrance Examination for Admission (ICAR-AIEEA)

- As several students could not complete the online registration process because of lockdown, the last date for submission of online applications was extended to enable the aspiring students to appear for the examination. The revised dates for correction in the particulars of application form, downloading of admit card, etc. shall be notified by National Testing Agency (NTA). In view of the re-scheduling of several examinations to be conducted by NTA, the date of ICAR-AIEEA as notified earlier may be delayed. The dates for the conduct of online counseling for admission shall also be notified accordingly.
- In the prevailing situation, the ICAR-AIEEA examination, and counseling for admissions are likely to be completed by the end of August 2020 so that the academic session 2020-21 may be planned from 1st September 2020.

Examinations and Evaluation

For most of the students, the lockdown may affect the tenure of their academic programmes which eventually disturbs the timeline of higher studies.

- The universities may conduct examinations (First Test, Mid-term and Semester end examinations) in offline / online mode, as per their Rules and Regulations, Scheme of Examinations, observing the guidelines of “social distancing” and keeping in view the support system available with them and ensuring fair opportunity to all students.
- The universities may conduct semester-end examinations, after making a comprehensive assessment of their level of preparedness, residential status of the students, status of COVID-19 pandemic spread in different region / state and other factors. In case the situation does not appear to be normal in view of COVID-19, in order to maintain “social distancing”, safety and health of the students, GPA of the students could be composite of 50% marks on the basis of the pattern of internal evaluation (First Test, Assignment and Mid-term) adopted by the universities and the remaining 50% marks can be awarded on the basis of performance in previous semester only (if available).
- In the situations where previous semester marks are not available, particularly in the first year, 100% evaluation may be done on the basis of internal evaluation. If the student wishes to improve the grades, he/she may appear in special exams for such subjects during next semester. This provision is only for the current academic session (2019-20) in view of COVID-19 pandemic, while maintaining safety and health of all the stakeholders and sanctity and quality of examinations.



Students Research and its Evaluation

- In most of the universities, the lockdown and pandemic situation affected the conduct of experiments which were designed and planned as a part of Students' Research Work leading to the delay in completion of the proposed research work.
- It would be appropriate that during the period of lockdown, laboratories are maintained by the research staff of the concerned department on rotation basis, without violating the norms of "social distancing". However, the universities may take appropriate measures to allow Ph.D. and Masters Students to carry out their research work in nearby research stations/research institutes, Regional Research Stations, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, with strict compliance of the guidelines/ directives issued by the appropriate authorities/ Governments from time to time.
- The universities may conduct the *Viva -Voce* Examinations of Ph.D. and M.Sc. students through Video Conferencing using any reliable and mutually convenient technology, subject to the approval of the concerned statutory authority of the university in compliance with the regulations regarding award of Ph.D./M.Sc. Degree. While conducting the *Viva-Voce* Examination through Video Conferencing using electronic means, it may be ensured that it will be open to be attended by members of the Student's Advisory Committee, all faculty members of the department, research scholars and other interested experts/ researchers, besides the Research Guide/Chairperson and Expert(s)/Examiner(s), as applicable. The on line viva voce may be recorded for any future reference.
- It is also imperative on the part of the university to maintain due record of the same, including the report received from Expert(s)/ Examiner(s) appointed for conducting the same.
- The M.Sc. or Ph.D. students, whose maximum period for submission of their Dissertation/Thesis prescribed under relevant rules / regulations of the concerned universities is expired/expiring during the Corona pandemic period, may be allowed to submit their Dissertation/Thesis, including completion of pending formalities, within six months from the date of expiry of regular prescribed period. The extension of six months may also be considered for those students who are yet to submit their Dissertation/ Thesis.

General advisory

- The universities should develop a fool-proof plan before the resumption of session, strictly following the norms of "social distancing" and other required precautions, to avoid any eventuality arising due to COVID-19.
- Special cells and teams may be created to supervise and ensure the safety measures in place.
- Every University may establish a Grievance Cell for handling student grievances related to examinations and academic activities during COVID-19 pandemic and notify



effectively to the students. Necessary steps may be taken by the university to accept the queries/grievances through online.

- All the universities may also work during week-ends to compensate the loss for the remaining session of 2019-20 and the next session 2020-21.
- In view of the importance of “social distancing”, universities may take necessary steps to ensure that the students are given exposure to laboratory assignments/ practical experiments through virtual laboratories, sharing of the recorded visuals of laboratory work and digital resources available for the purpose, wherever plausible.
- The ICAR, so far, has supported the creation of about 350 virtual classrooms in different agricultural universities. These universities are requested to see that they are fully functional during the pandemic situation. Further, every college should develop virtual classroom and video conferencing facility. The university may give priority for these facilities while submitting the demands under ICAR development grants.
- All teaching staff should be trained with the use of the ICT technologies for online learning process. The teachers should be encouraged to participate in such training programmes planned by ICAR for capacity building programmes under Summer School/Winter School/CAFT.
- The universities should strengthen the mechanism of counselling through a dedicated portal on university website to impart timely guidance and counselling to the students. Besides, the faculty advisor assigned to each student should maintain regular communication with the students.
- The universities may devise a proforma to record the Travel/ Stay history of the staff and students for the period when they were away from the university due to lockdown, so that necessary precautions may be taken in specific cases, if required. In addition, the universities will strictly comply with all precautions and preventive measures to curb the spread of COVID -19.
- In view of the present scenario and future uncertainties, the universities may adopt and implement these advisories in a transparent manner by making alterations/ additions/ modifications/ amendments to deal with particular situation(s) in the best interest of students, educational institution and the entire education system,
- In case of educational institutions located at places where the Government (Centre/ State) has imposed restrictions on gathering of public, the institutions may plan accordingly, preferably, public gatherings may be postponed.
- For the students, who do not have access to computers, internet, smart phones, etc., the necessary facilities may be extended at Regional Research Stations/KVKs where they can easily travel and attend online classes and evaluation.

Notwithstanding the above advisory regarding the resumption of session, conduct of examinations and commencement of next academic session, every university/ college has to ensure that it is prepared in respects to carry out the academic activities following necessary advisories/guidelines/directions issued by the Central/State Government, UGC or ICAR from time to time to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
